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17 October 1963

The Status of Milovan Djilas

1. Some change can be expected shortly in the status of Milovan Djilas, author of The New Class and Conversations with Stalin, [redacted]

[redacted] Rumors have been circulating in the Yugoslav capital for two weeks that Djilas has already been exiled to a remote Bosnian village, but [redacted]

[redacted] Djilas as yet remains in prison. A recent comment by the Yugoslav cabinet's press secretary that he knew 'nothing official' about a change in Djilas' situation has added fuel to the fire.

2. Djilas has roughly seven years yet to serve out an 8 year, 8 month sentence imposed on 7 April 1962 as a direct consequence of his having allowed publication of Conversations with Stalin. The regime has apparently denied him such special privileges as writing materials, which he had been allowed during his previous term. We have received no reports, however, that Djilas is suffering from ill health, although he was frequently reported to be suffering during his previous incarceration.

3. Once the number two man in the Tito regime, Djilas is one of those rare political figures who chose martyrdom as a matter of conscience. The personification of unrequited Montenegrin rebelliousness, he threw away prestige and position when Communism became intellectually unpalatable to him. His political philosophy has by now evolved to the point that he is a democrat in the Western sense. During his last period of freedom--20 January 1961 to 7 April 1962--he indicated that he fully expects someday to resume an active political role in Yugoslavia. He even told Westerners that he was considering establishing an opposition party and publishing an opposition periodical.

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4. Djilas' current imprisonment is largely the result of his own deliberate acts. When paroled in 1962, he signed an agreement to refrain from all political activities. He could have had no doubts that Belgrade would regard the publication of Conversations with Stalin, a telling anti-Communist tract, as a political act. He was given five years for failing to stop its release; the remainder of his current sentence represents the unexpired portion of his previous sentence. Prior to his reimprisonment Djilas told Western newsmen that he would not mind going back to jail because he was a bigger threat to the regime in jail than out.

5. The regime has never known how to handle Djilas, but it has stopped short of any unusual harshness. The first time he got in trouble (1953), he was removed from his party posts; the second time (1954), he was given an 18-month suspended sentence; the third time (1956), he received a 3-year jail sentence; the fourth time (1957), he was given an additional seven year, but was paroled. Throughout this period, Djilas steadfastly refused to recant or to emigrate which the regime has hinted it would permit.

6. The regime's treatment of Djilas has been governed in part by its reluctance to incur a bad press in the West, where Djilas' status is broadly regarded as a gauge of the regime's liberalism. It also appears that Yugoslavia's top leaders have felt--at least until recently--a good measure of friendship, guilt, or pity toward their former comrade.

7. Djilas claimed that he wrote five books during his previous incarceration. When the authorities returned them to him after his parole, he intended having two, Montenegro and one about the 19th century Montenegrin Prince-Bishop Njegos, published in the West. Djilas has described the latter as something like the controversial Russian book, Doctor Zhivago, and it could conceivably cause him additional troubles with the regime. Of the other three books, one is a collection of short stories.

8. Djilas' wife and son live in Belgrade. Although they are subject to a degree of social ostracism, Mrs. Djilas is allowed to receive some of the royalties from

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her husband's books and to talk to Westerners.

Q. The only Yugoslav leader to go into disgrace with Djilas, Vladimir Dedijer, was allowed to go into exile in Great Britain in November 1959. Although Dedijer and his family suffered grievously before their departure, he was allowed to return to Yugoslavia for a visit last summer. [redacted]

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General Comments

Joseph Alsop's recent articles on China are difficult to comment on in a constructive way. They can not be considered as serious contributions to our knowledge of the current scene in China; one can even question if they were meant to be. Alsop's approach is to dramatize any development through emotion charged language and exaggeration, the tone of all his articles is arrogant and categorical. His constant feud with unnamed "straw men", is intended to give him the air of a courageous and searching reporter, bringing the facts before the public despite the opposition of the "bureaucrats," the "fashionable twaddlers," the "striped pants cookie-pushers." Unfortunately, where Alsop deserts the pretentiously portentous generalization for the facts, the facts are usually wrong or distorted into the framework of a structure they can not sustain.

We cannot quarrel with his general thesis: that Communist China is in serious economic difficulty, that its armed forces are deteriorating, that the Sino-Soviet conflict is a major historical development. The difficulty is that Alsop is not satisfied with this; this is dramatic, but not dramatic enough. As each of the points is expanded, the picture is darkened a number of tones, the history is oversimplified, earlier questionable predictions which have not come to pass are explained with even more questionable hypothesis, and the result is a picture of doom which almost no one else, either out of base motives or basic ignorance, has been able to discern. Alsop reminds one of the early Hebrew prophets whose fulminations contained valid elements, but whose arrogant holier-than-thou language and dramatic distortions put off their more intelligent listeners.

Comments on the individual articles follow.

14 September Article

The以上 article of 30 September contrasting the development of Communist China and Hong Kong since World War II is misleading chiefly because it fails to take account of either the extreme differences in size of the two areas or the dissimilar character of the two economies. Hong Kong's small size has been in several ways an asset to its development.

The application of a given small amount of capital, technical skill and energy to the situation in Hong Kong has produced spectacular results. A similar input to the vast economy of mainland China would hardly be noticeable.

Small size has permitted rapid training of skilled workers, and the development of other requisites to Hong Kong's industrialization. Small size has also made for more effective use of refugee know-how, particularly the know-how of refugee Shanghai industrialists. Similarly, the impact of capital investment on the minuscule Hong Kong economy was greater than would have been the case had the same sums been invested in China.

Moreover the drive and skills of refugee businessmen, industrialists, and technicians have been channeled by an established, British-trained and led civil service notable for its honesty and ability.

Finally, Hong Kong as an established trading port enjoyed established banking facilities and ready transportation services. As a member of the British Commonwealth it found no necessity for autarky or defense burdens.

2 and 4 October Articles

The allegation that no questions were expressed about the future stability of China during 1961 or 1962 by "expert China-watchers" is another Alsop "straw man" thesis. Both intelligence and scholarly work on China written in 1961 was heavily weighted toward the severe economic difficulties facing the regime. The evidence was clear that the stability of the economy had been disrupted by the poor harvest, the withdrawal of Soviet technical aid, and the follies of the leap forward. This in turn raised the question of how the economy could recover from such problems.

Alsop is correct in stating that life is now "a little better," largely because the food intake has risen. The reason he gives for this improvement--more freedom for the peasant to grow food on his own private plot--are also reflected in information available here. His figures for caloric intake per day are roughly acceptable although the present day level is somewhat higher than he indicates. We estimate that food intake during the first half of 1963-

was around 1900 calories per day, instead of the 1600 to 1700 estimated by Alsop.

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We agree with Alsop's statement that this year's harvest will be about the same as last year's; in fact, we believe it will be slightly less than last year's harvest, but the lack of good information makes it impossible to be very precise on this point.

Although we would agree that the margin for investment in growth is now severely limited, it is difficult to accept the further statement that there are "almost no prospects of such a margin being created in the future." Alsop adds that the people can not continue at this level of wretchedness and that the bottom is therefore not yet in sight. If the regime had persisted in the idiocies of the leap forward, Alsop's assumption would have some merit. But given the retreat from these excesses and the tacit acknowledgement that communalization was adding to the agricultural problems, one can also assume more rational procedures for the

economy and thereby hypothesize at least the prospect of future growth, even though this growth will necessarily be very slow, and vulnerable to any radical proposals that the leadership may put forth in the future.

In the article of 4 October, Alsop stresses the thesis of a "no exit situation." Contrary to what appears to be Alsop's assumption, the Chinese leadership has a number of ways to get out of the present difficult economic situation. Most of these paths for saving the economy require sacrificing some goals, which the leadership will hesitate to do. Judging by past performances, however, they are more likely to jettison some of these vague goals rather than blunder on into self-destruction, as Alsop seems to assume they will.

Alsop's references to population are not too clear but he seems to be implying that the Chinese have all but solved their population problem and are no longer faced with the prospect of a further increase. He argues that the population--at least based on his limited sample--fell during the worst years and is now approximately stable. We believe that the rate of population growth fell to 1½% during the worst period of the food shortages--from a level that probably reached 2½% around 1958. With the improvement in the food situation and the resultant fall in morbidity rates, it can be assumed that mortality will also fall, leading to a rising rate of population growth. If one accepted Alsop's population estimates then it follows that the number of deaths in 1961 would have been no less than 30 million and possibly a great deal more. Needless to say, there was no evidence that mortality reached this level, even though it obviously increased during the period of food shortages.

As regards production estimates, Alsop estimates that current industrial output is between 30 and 40% of capacity. We estimate that in 1963 industrial output was around 50% of its previously achieved peak level. In agriculture, Alsop cites "scientific interrogation" which showed that post-collectivization decreases in per acre production were between 50 and 70%. While it is possible that such decreases took place in isolated areas, the implicit assumption that

is common to all of China is absurd. We would agree with Alsop, however, that "collectively organized agriculture is outrageously inefficient." This is emphasized by the higher productivity of the private plots, a fact which must now be apparent to the leadership.

While Alsop is obviously correct to emphasize the serious economic problems facing China, his conclusions that the situation can only worsen is poorly supported by the facts. Rather than following a "descending spiral," as Alsop earlier insisted, the economy seems to be leveling off with no immediate prospect of any significant upturn or further downturn. Where the currently sluggish economy goes from here depends largely on planning decisions now being made in Peiping. Alsop seems to assume that future economic planning will be as unrealistic as it was during the leap forward. If this is the case then it is true that one should look for further economic difficulties. But as yet there is no clear indication from Peiping about the direction of future economic planning. Alsop's dramatic conclusions therefore appear somewhat premature, to say the least.

7 October Article

The central thesis of this article by Alsop is that the exchanges between the Soviet Union and Communist China concerning the "violations" of the border are intended on the Soviet side as a threat to deter the Chinese from attacking the Indian border. It should be recalled that Alsop was one of the most active journalists in blowing up the non-existent Chinese buildup on the Indian border this summer and in insisting that the Chinese were about to attack in force. This, of course, has been shown to be without foundation and Alsop is now constrained to find an explanation for why the Chinese have not attacked when the Indians have left a vacuum and they have such overwhelming strength in opposition. It would be too much to expect Alsop to admit that he was wrong, or even to review the material he originally presented. Instead, we have another flight of fancy, a distortion of historical viewpoint, screwed up to the most dramatic point possible.

This article has a few, very few, correct facts in it. The Soviets have accused the Chinese of "5000 border violations." These probably were, in the main, unauthorized border crossings in remote areas of the frontier by nomadic herdsmen. It is true, as Alsop says, that thousands of Chinese made their way across the Soviet frontier in Sinkiang. We have no evidence, however, that the Soviets are "publishing horror stories in Sinkiang." We doubt that Alsop has any such evidence, either. The Soviets have published a few letters from some of the refugees in the Soviet press and broadcast them abroad. This may be what Alsop is referring to. At any rate these few facts are not what Alsop builds his article from. The remainder is pure speculation, with a bias.

We would assess the Chinese and Soviet exchanges on border violations and border problems as part of the polemics of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Khrushchev began this a year or more ago when he twitted the Chinese for not taking Macao and Hong Kong in retaliation for their accusations that he had "capitulated" in Cuba. The Chinese responded with a veiled threat that someday they would rectify all unequal treaties,

including those of Tsarist Russia. When the two sides after July 1963 went all out in attempting to blacken the other before the international Communist world, accusations of border violations and other border problems were publicized. There is truth in the fact that the Sino-Soviet border is a difficult problem for the two countries--there is exaggeration in an assumption that it will lead to fighting, that the Soviets are threatening to come over the border in Sinkiang to deter the Chinese from attacking on the Indian border.

9 October Article

Alsop's prediction that "it will be very remarkable if bad trouble does not come in the end" is typical of his disingenuous apocalyptic view of the world. As a professional Cassandra Alsop is forever prophesying disaster--at some unspecified future time.

There is no hazard in a prediction of serious trouble in China, or on China's frontiers, during the next three or four years. Explaining it in terms of group paranoia at the top of the Chinese Communist heap, however, is as misleading as it is sensational.

The leaders in Peiping are convinced and doctrinaire Communists. Their ideology is overlayed on a monstrous cultural/racial arrogance which makes them in effect "more Catholic than the Pope." They have been struggling with economic and political problems of staggering size and have attempted to solve them by the most drastic remedies--with disastrous result.

All this does not prove that Mao and the men around are crazy, but rather that they have been operating on a mistaken theory of social organization, the errors of which have been compounded by faulty information about the situation in their own country and in the world outside.

The central argument in Alsop's case that lunacy is in command concerns the "leap forward" and an alleged Chinese attempt to trigger nuclear war in order to salvage something from the catastrophe which followed the ensuing catastrophe.

In this argument he has taken liberties with the chronology of events and with the facts. The "leap" was undertaken when the Chinese felt--not without some justification--that things were going for them across the board. Encouraged by achievements at home, and by an overly optimistic estimate of the overall Bloc position vis a vis the West, the men in Peiping took a calculated risk in hope of scoring a dramatic breakthrough on both political and economic fronts.

They were, in fact warned again this gamble by the Russians. Perhaps Peng Te-huai became involved in this argument but all the evidence we have points

to other reasons for this downfall--specifically his involvement in the problem of when and under what circumstances China would receive nuclear weapons and other modern arms.

Mao's remarks concerning nuclear war were made in November 1957--before the "leap"--and for reasons which had no direct relation to the subsequent events.

11 October Article

This article is basically correct. The Chinese Communist armed forces are deteriorating and this deterioration began after the withdrawal of Soviet technical aid and military assistance in mid-1960.

There are several erroneous implications in the article. For one thing the modernization of the Chinese forces did not begin in earnest until after the Korean War. He speaks of semo-operational aircraft. An aircraft is either operational or it is not. The Chinese have many fully operational aircraft despite the ravages of attrition.

Alsop considers the forces in Tibet to be "crack outfits." Our judgement is that some of those in East China, particularly the Foochow Military Region are probably much more "crack" than those in Tibet. But, of course, the Sino-Indian border is the one area where ChiCom troops have been in combat recently and there they made a good showing because they outnumbered, were better equipped, and operated from more advantageous terrain than their Indian adversaries. Like all armies, there are good and not so good units. We do not think the best units are in Tibet.

The error in fact is the assertion that the ChiCom Air Force had as many as 4000 planes. It reached its peak strength in 1959 at which time it had a few more jet light bombers than it does now. Our present count is about 2700. But even now, as then, there are several units which are still equipped with museum pieces from World War II. These include the BAT TU-2 piston light bomber and the WEST (IL-10) piston ground attack aircraft.

Another typical error is Alsop's statement that "vast amount of ignorant nonsense has been written about 'Soviet aid' being cut off. China never has received any Soviet aid, having been required to pay through the nose for all exports from the Communist Bloc since the very beginning." Some of this "ignorant

"nonsense" has been written by us, for we include, as also apparently does not, the technical and scientific aid which the Soviet's rendered China and which made possible the beginnings of its nuclear energy program, among other things, and various credit arrangements which are no longer available to the Chinese and are causing difficulties. The Chinese, themselves, have noted this aid from the Soviet Union and have decried the Soviets' unilateral withdrawal of it in the summer of 1960, claiming that the withdrawal was unjustified and that it did their economy untold harm.

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14 October 1963 Article

This article is merely a panegyric to Chiang Kai-shek, and only incidentally a half-hearted prediction that things on the mainland are so bad that Mao deeply fears any possibility that Chiang might launch an invasion. There are only two hard facts in it; both are wrong. a) Two years ago, the Communists did not hastily redeploy "upwards of 300,000 troops" to strengthen their defenses against a possible landing by Chiang of a division and a half. In June 1962, the Communists redeployed about 90,000 troops apparently in fear that the US was about to aid in an invasion of the mainland. The mainlanders would hardly have moved, at great cost, this many men to meet Chiang's division and a half. b) The Soviet have not cut off their oil shipments to China.

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The rest of the article, to use Mr. Alsop's elegant phrase, is merely "fashionable twaddle." Its history is incredibly bad. Statements such as the following: "The Communists, who always used the Japanese to run interference for them, thus won control over huge new provinces in the wake of the Japanese advance," abound. Such oversimplifications, and descriptions such as that of General Stilwell, a "foolish and violent old man" says Alsop, would require more space than is warranted to comment on fully. But they really require little comment since they can hardly be taken seriously.

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16 October Article

It is true that pro-Chinese leaders exert a significant influence in almost every Asian Communist Party of consequence. It is not true, however, that Peiping has "taken over" and thus implicitly shaped to its own image each of these parties. There are significant elements in the leadership of the major Marxist parties of non-Communist Asian countries who are still aligned with the Soviets.

In the case of Communist North Vietnam, a strong faction of the leadership, lead by the Premier and the Minister of Defense, while it has lost considerable ground to a pro-Chinese coalition, is apparently still exercising a considerable braking power over Hanoi's political drift toward Peiping.

The major error in this article is not the conclusions, but reasons advanced. In each case where a faction of the leadership in the Asian Communist parties is in step with Peiping, it appears that the causes are primarily not those advanced by Mr. Alsop: (Kim Il-sung's Stalinist stance and the infusion of ChiCom trained cadres into other parties, for example) The primary factor for the factions orientation toward Peiping is rather that they see their party's basic interests as best served at present by the policies propagated by Peiping.

In Japan, Indonesia, and Burma, for example, the Communists have over a long period been unable to secure their basic objectives through legal, parliamentary-like means. Thus, they are turning to Peiping which is calling steadily for "militant, armed-revolutionary-type struggle" as the best technique to gain power. The Chinese, moreover, seem willing to provide at least the money, and in presently feasible cases, some of the materiel necessary to proceed as classic revolutionaries. Moscow has given every indication in the recent past of a growing unwillingness to do this.

Both North Korea and North Vietnam are basically preoccupied with reuniting their countries under Communist rule. Both have implicitly accused Moscow of softness and calliance in helping further this

objective. Both are concerned that an Soviet-US detente will prevent them from attaining these objectives. Peiping, on the other hand, is helping in a real, tangible way. The Chinese oppose "softness" toward the US, proclaim loudly the need for support of revolutionary wars, and are willing, to the best of their ability to supply the means of continuing such a war. These reasons loom larger than any presumed "Stalinist" cast to the leaders' thinking.